

VZCZCXRO5947
PP RUEHTRO
DE RUEHNJ #0778/01 1531017
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021017Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3857
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 1153
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0773
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 0646
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 1074
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0227
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1420
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY PRIORITY 2695
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1811
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY 1204
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0782
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY 0231

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000778

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KCRS](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD: PRESIDENT, OPPOSITION ACKNOWLEDGE NEED FOR
DIALOGUE

REF: NDJAMENA 772

Classified By: POL/ECON OFFICER MICHAEL P. ZORICK, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND
(D).

SUMMARY:

1. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary Don Yamamoto discussed with Chad's President Idriss Deby Itno on 30 May the pressing need for the creation of a space for political dialogue between Deby and Chad's political opposition. Opposition politicians were fulsome in their description of the barriers and challenges they face in dealing with President Deby's regime, but agreed to consider ideas for how a dialogue might be conducted. President Deby declared that he is already well along in planning such a national discussion -- but stressed that he did not necessarily think the result should be political reform. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) AF DAS Don Yamamoto met 30 May with seven key representatives of Chad's political opposition, grouped under the umbrella of the Coordination of the Political Parties for the Defense of the Constitution (CPDC), with Ambassador Wall at the latter's residence. AF/C Director, S/CRS Director, PRM DAS, and Pol/Econ officer (notetaker) attended. The CPDC group consisted of Lol Mahamat Choua (RDP), Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh (PLD), Wadal Abdelkader Kamougue (UDR), Salibou Garba (AND), Saleh Kebzabo (UNDR), Jean Alingue (URD), as well as Naralejy Yorongar of the FAR. DAS Yamamoto also engaged President Deby on the same subject later that day. (Discussions with Deby of Chadian support for groups undermining the Darfur Peace Agreement were reported reftel).

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
CAN FACILITATE DIALOGUE

3. (C) DAS Yamamoto opened the discussion with both the political opposition representatives, and with President Deby. He said that, after his most recent visit to Chad five weeks prior, he had done his homework. This had meant extensive coordination with international partners in the EU and AU, as well as with France. Yamamoto reported that there

is now unity of purpose among Chad's friends in seeking to help in the creation of a political space for dialogue between the President and his government, on the one hand, and the political opposition, civil society, unions and other concerned parties, on the other.

14. (C) Yamamoto stressed that such a space for dialogue would need to be used to discuss both political and economic reform. Important subjects such as reform of Chad's electoral system, preparations for municipal and legislative elections, good governance and transparent accounting of revenues would be of critical importance. He presented a set of ideas for possible outcomes of the discussions, including the appointment of a strong Prime Minister drawn from the opposition, who would be a European-style executive in charge of managing the government. The PM could draw ministers from a mix of the ruling party and opposition groups, with the goal of national reconciliation reflected in the government itself.

15. (C) Yamamoto acknowledged that much of the international community has viewed Chad solely through the lens of the Darfur conflict, and committed to push for more focus on Chad's own domestic political challenges. He asked his interlocutors to exercise continued patience; to provide input, guidance, and support to initiatives of the international community to encourage a political opening; to conduct their own dialogue from a basis of cooperation; and to see the international community as a facilitator. He acknowledged that the process would be difficult, and progress may be initially marginal, but good will was required for Chad to avoid chaos.

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OPPOSITION SEES NEED,
AS WELL AS OBSTACLES

16. (C) The political leaders were generally united in their responses to Yamamoto's ideas. The PLD's Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh called the situation one of deep crisis, leading to open rebellion, conflict and war. The crisis had passed the point of "electoral solutions" and required "non-exclusive dialogue", including the participation of the armed opposition. Saleh Kabzabo of the UNDR agreed with Yamamoto that patience would be a virtue, with the hardest negotiations yet to come. He made the link between Chad, the conflict in Darfur, and domestic political conflict, saying it was clear that solutions for Darfur must include solutions for Chad's political crisis. The UDR leader, Salibou Garba, called Yamamoto's ideas indicative of where a process might end, but he asked, by what road would Chad get there? He repeatedly stressed that all possible solutions must be in conformity with the Chadian Constitution -- President Deby and his National Assembly would be able to easily reject any proposal that did not meet this minimum requirement on constitutional grounds, and a strong PM from the opposition had constitutional implications.

17. (C) Former PM and URD leader Jean Alingue reminded Yamamoto of the similarities between some of the ideas the international community put forward, and those already tried in Chad, as recently as 2001. He stressed taking into account Chad's past experience, as well as the need for Chadians to start the dialogue in order to define their own end point for the process. The FAR's Naralejy Yorongar closed the first exchange, saying that the political opposition had tried to effect change from inside the Chadian system, and had failed. He stressed the impact of external interference from Chad's neighbors, and the existence of genuine armies among the opposition that had to be considered.

AGREE TO TRY

18. (C) The discussion evolved to focus on the need to build confidence required for dialogue, and to move quickly before the window of opportunity closes, and Chad descends again into open warfare. UDR leader Wadel Abdelkader Kamougue warned that France sought to maintain Deby in power, and said that only "cutting out the cancer" of Deby could bring real reconciliation. The RDP's Lol Mahamat Choua agreed, calling Deby Chad's Noriega -- a criminal, not a president. Ambassador noted that a roadmap toward a peaceful, democratic Chad would require a willingness to turn a page on deep-seated animosities, and to work with partners that have in the past been unreliable. DAS Yamamoto pushed them to start the dialogue among themselves, so that they will have unity of purpose and ownership of the process. The political leaders made clear that, while they were in close concertation with each other, and ready for peaceful dialogue, the ideas set forth had, as their end result, a removal of the President from his dominant position -- and this would not come easily to President Deby. They nevertheless agreed to come together in a smaller group to work on proposals for how such a dialogue might proceed.

DEBY: WILL PROPOSE DIALOGUE SOON

19. (C) President Deby responded to similarly structured ideas later that afternoon. He accused the CPDC parties of "putting the bar too high" on opening a dialogue with his government, seeking to create a constitutional crisis with the help of "foreign friends". He stressed that continued outside interference would not help the process of dialogue to progress, and that Chad should be allowed to evolve "like a normal country" without the meddling of prejudiced or biased foreigners. Deby stated that he would take the initiative to launch a dialogue with the entire political class, in preparation for municipal and legislative

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elections. He welcomed the help of Chad's true friends, as long as there were not attempts to jeopardize the national institutions he had built. He declared that he had created a 30-person Committee of Wise Men (Comite des Sages), under the chairmanship of former President Malloum, that would present him as soon as 2 June with proposals for structuring a political dialogue. Deby stated that his time frame would be to conduct this dialogue in the period between his investiture as president and the expected legislative elections in 2007. He declared himself ready to call on the help of Chad's friends, should he find that necessary.

110. (C) Ambassador told the President that the President's comments were welcome, especially his discussion of plans for encouraging a new, more positive political process in Chad. He stressed that political reform would be critical to ensuring a peaceful and democratic Chad. Deby quickly clarified that what he intended to launch was a dialogue, not necessarily political reform.

COMMENT

111. (C) Notwithstanding their deep mistrust and reservations, the opposition leaders were more open to the idea of engaging in a political dialogue than they were before the May 3 election. In our exchange with them, they ruled out any dialogue with President Deby's government unless the elections were postponed. President Deby is also now preparing a plan for launching discussions. But in this meeting, he was careful to note his concerns about foreign involvement and to correct any mis-perceptions that he might have in mind a new, more inclusive political process. His message seemed to be: Don't ask us, we'll ask you. END
COMMENT.

112. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
WALL